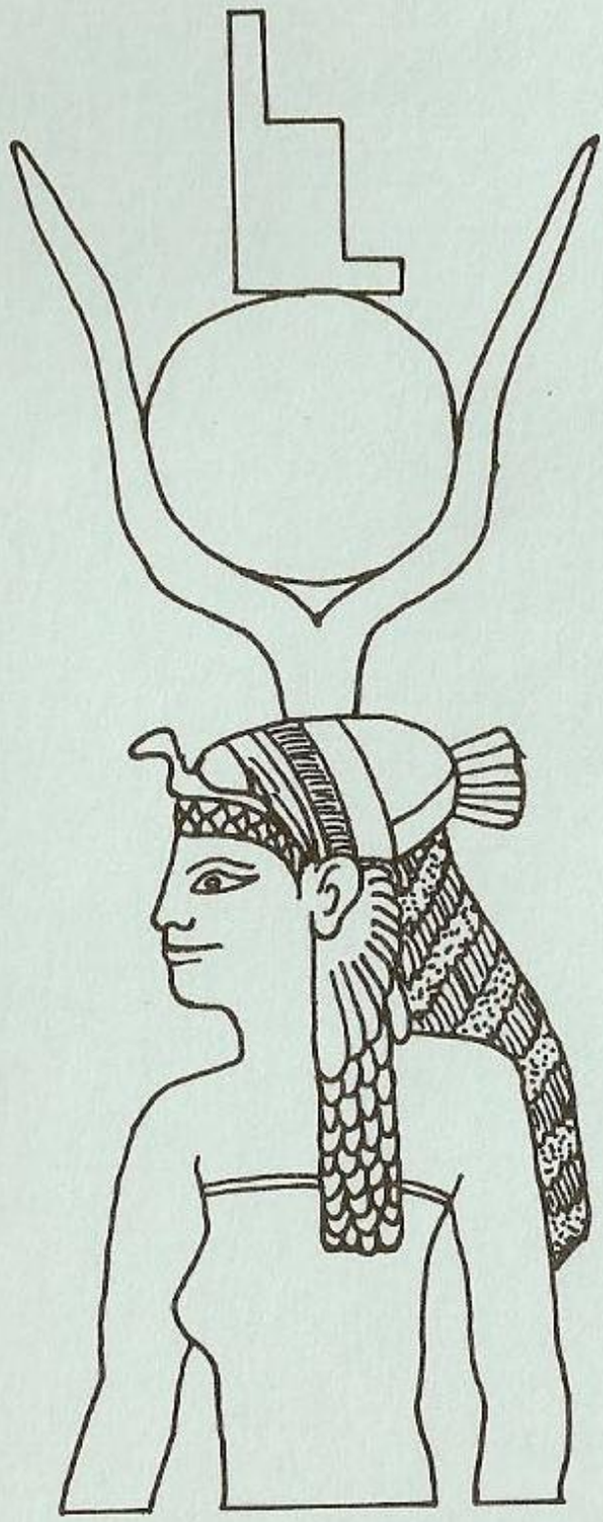
the ROHMER REVIEW



No. 8

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The biggest news at the moment is the fact that, contrary to earlier belief, the scripts of Rohmer's plays *The Eye of Siva* and *Secret Egypt* are not lost. Acting on the suggestion of John Nieminski ("Letters to Limehouse", TRR #7), W. O. G. Lofts has been able to locate copies in the Lord Chamberlain's Office in London. Photo-copies of the scripts are on the way from London at this moment. There are no present plans for reprinting the plays, but one never knows what might develop in the future.

It should be pointed out that Bill Lofts' description of *Secret Egypt* in this issue was written before the script was discovered, and is based on accounts in theatrical papers of the time.

Shortly after the publication of TRR #7, the 1971 Annual Edition of Luther Norris' *Pontine Dossier* appeared. There are two items in this edition which should be of especial interest to Rohmer enthusiasts: "The Last Encounter" by James Wade, a humorous modern view of Fu Manchu and Nayland Smith, illustrated by Tom Walker; and "Fu Manchu Thinks Kindly of Sir Denis Nayland Smith", verse by Edward Lauterbach, illustrated by William Dixon. Copies of the *Dossier* may still be available from Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California 90230; price, $3.00.

Another item of interest is *Fantastic*: A New Collection of Scenes from All-Time Favorite Films Featuring Boris Karloff, compiled by Alan G. Barbour. This is a 52-page booklet, letter size, printed on heavy paper. Eleven of the photos included are scenes from *The Mask of Fu Manchu*. (F. & S. F. Book Co., Box 415, Staten Island, N.Y. 10302, may possibly be able to supply this; enquire before ordering. The price is around $4.00.)

Getting away from Sax Rohmer for the moment, let me recommend the magazine *Nyctalops*, edited and published by Harry O. Morris, Jr. (500 Wellesley, S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106). The magazine is devoted to H. P. Lovecraft and to the various authors in the "Lovecraft tradition". Issue #6, just received, is a well-printed and beautifully illustrated 48-page compendium of articles, poetry, and bibliographical material. Subscription: 3/$1.50.

Another recommended publication is *The JDM Bibliophile*, edited and published by Len & June Moffatt, Box 4456, Downey,

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The Thugs and Dacoits of India

by John E. Carroll

There is scarcely any reader of the Fu Manchu tales who does not remember the murderous servants of the terrible Chinese doctor. Always near at hand there lurked a Thug or a Dacoit to be summoned by the master. We have been told of their pursuing Smith and Petrie along the bank of the Thames, against a background of Windsor Castle in silhouette; of the sudden disappearance in the river of one of their fraternity, leaving only a solitary water-fowl gliding by (the Thug was actually submerged and was using a dummy bird as a head-piece); of their being punished for failures or for losing one of the doctor's venomous "pets"; of the time when Smith and Petrie, searching Fu Manchu's laboratory on an old hulk near the river, found their escape blocked by two fierce-looking guardians with scimitars; and of those helpers who cast bodies into the furnace in a forgotten tunnel under the Thames. The latter tunnel sequence, from *The Trail of Fu Manchu*, was incorporated into the motion picture *The Brides of Fu Manchu* (1966); in the film, Dacoits forced the victims into a water-tight drowning chamber rather than a furnace. Dacoits were also active in *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1965). The manner in which they entered the home of an intended victim brought back memories of the episode of the Fiery Hand at The Gables, and of the small figure which came down through the trap in the roof to retrieve the death adder from Abel Slattin's study.

But other than Sax Rohmer's use of Thugs and Dacoits as messengers of death, what do we actually know about them? Why did he choose them to be the servants of Fu Manchu?

I.

Of the two groups, the Thugs were the more dangerous. They were a highly organized religious sect, operating under a system of belief called *Thuggee*, which involved robbery and ritual murder. The name "Thug" is derived from the Hindustani *thag*,

meaning "deceiver" or "robber", which in turn comes from the Sanskrit *sthag*, "to conceal", hence *sthaga*, "a cheat". The history of the Thugs can be traced back to certain Muslim tribes who settled in India many centuries ago. Much of this Islamic connection is veiled in obscurity and has been difficult to unravel. It is believed that these Muslims were descended from the Sagartii, a tribe of Persian horsemen in the time of Xerxes. In later times, the Sagartii accompanied one of the Mohammedan invaders of India, and settled near Delhi. Thugs, as such, are first mentioned in *The History of Firoz Shāh* by Ziā-ud-Dīn Barnī, written about 1356 A.D. In this work it is related that they had made the mistake of victimizing a person of authority close to the ruling prince. In 1290 A.D. more than a thousand of them were captured in Delhi and driven from the city after having been branded on the buttocks with a heated copper coin.

Some went to Agra, and came to be called Agureea Thugs. Others went to Arcot; Arcotee Thugs wore checkered pantaloons and short jackets after the style of Sepoys and carried knapsacks, canes, and small pouches filled with betel nuts and paun. Their leaders (Jemadars) posed as wealthy merchants or travellers. Hindustanee Thugs looked down on those of Arcot. The exclusive Chingurees or Mooltanee Thugs travelled as *brinjarees* (bullock drivers) and strangled their victims with bullock ropes. Their nomadic habits minimized suspicion and detection. The Chingurees practiced female infanticide, keeping only a sufficient number of girls to provide wives. The Jumaldehee Thugs, who settled in Ouda, were an outwardly respectable tribe and kept their wives and children in ignorance of their true occupation. Some Thugs came from rich families or rose to high offices, which may have accounted for the secret support afforded by some native princes. Many Thugs joined the military and became excellent soldiers; but during leaves they would revert to their old practices and commit as many murders as possible before returning to duty.

Thugs generally gathered into small bands of from ten to two hundred men. Each band had a leader, a pick-bearer, entrappers, scouts, stranglers (*phansigars*, from *phansi*, "handkerchief"), and grave-diggers. As they journeyed they ate, slept, and worshipped together, while scouts and grave-diggers went on ahead to prepare a suitable place for the murders and burials to come. It was the special duty of the entrappers to act as decoys, posing as merchants or pilgrims and attaching themselves to the cortèges of wealthy travellers to lead the latter into ambush. Thugs preferred to commit their murders in the evening, while their intended victims, having been lured to a location prepared in advance, were seated around a fire, smoking or playing the sitar. Three Thugs usually were assigned to each victim: two held his arms and legs while the third strangled him. To make the murders easier, the victims were sometimes stupefied with drugs or poisons. The strangling was performed with a *romāl* (also *roomal* or *rumel*). This was a large silk handkerchief (sometimes worn

as a turban or sash when not being put to more lethal use), usually white or yellow in color; the kerchief was doubled to a length of approximately thirty inches and tied with a fixed knot at one end and a slip-knot in the middle.

With rare exceptions, no adult survivors were permitted. The bodies were mutilated to hasten decomposition, and then buried in such a way as to leave no trace. (Typical episodes of this type were depicted in the Hammer film *Stranglers of Bombay*.) Male children were sometimes spared and adopted into the band.

In order to maintain secrecy and still be able to recognize a fellow believer, the Thugs had secret signs, and communicated by means of verbal codes and a special language called *Ramasi*. They often left messages by making signs in the dust with their feet, or strewing leaves and impressing heel-marks in a certain pattern. Where the ground was too hard for this, they left small cairns of rocks.

The religion of the Thugs is a strange mixture of legend, omens, tabus and superstition. The principal deity is the goddess Kali, consort of Siva the Destroyer. Kali is also known by the names Devi, Durga, Parvati and Bhavani (or Bhowanee). The goddess is said to have first appeared on earth on the banks of the River Hooghly, at a spot later called *Kalikata* (Dwelling of Kali), now known as Calcutta, where her chief festival, the Durga Puja, is still celebrated.

Legend relates that Kali was once engaged in a battle with the demon Rukut Beej-Dana. When she cut him in twain, each drop of his blood became another demon, and when these in turn were made to shed blood, they multiplied in like fashion. The demons became so numerous and so taxed the goddess' strength that she created two men out of drops of her sweat and gave them a strip of cotton torn from the hem of her skirt, a *roomal* with which they strangled all the demons. These men were the founders of the Thug sect. Although commanded by Kali to destroy all men who were not kindred of the sect, Thugs were forbidden to spill blood in their murders. They worshipped their goddess with fanataicism, and their conviction that they were commanded to murder by this deity left them without any sense of guilt. They considered themselves priests performing the holy work of the goddess. In their view, the victims were sacrifices to Kali; as such, their spirits were immediately admitted to Paradise.

(There seem to have been numerous exceptions to the injunction that all non-Thugs were to be killed. Any of the following were spared: persons accompanied by a woman or a cow or any domestic animal; outcasts, holy men, religious mendicants; pilgrims taking the bones of their parents to a river; Brahmans or Kaets (members of the writer caste); potters, carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, elephant drivers, musicians, and dancing masters.)

Kali is depicted as a black-skinned being whose countenance bears a hideous expression and whose body is blood-drenched and adorned with snakes and tiny human skulls. To those who honored and revered her, Kali was generous, bestowing a tooth to be used as a pick-axe, a rib to serve as a knife, and the hem of her garment for a noose. She was called *Kunkali*, or "man-eater", due to the belief that she disposed of bodies by devouring them. A Thug legend describes an occasion when a Thug, departing from the scene of a murder, looked behind him---a forbidden act--- and beheld Kali at her favorite game of playing catch with the bodies while consuming them. From that time onward, Thugs were enjoined to bury the bodies of their victims.

Thugs observed several important rituals, among them the peculiar ceremony of the consecration of the *kusee*, or pick-axe. This ceremony could be performed only on certain days of the week. The tribe's blacksmith must devote his entire time to the fabrication of the instrument. The pundit, a learned or wise man, would then determine the appropriate day for the ritual. The ceremony had to be performed inside a tent or under an awning or other shelter, to prevent the shadow of any living thing from being cast upon the finished pick-axe. After an incense offering had been made and a large pit dug in the ground, the axe was brought in on a large brass tray. A devout Thug, experienced in the ritual, would wash the axe in water, then in a sugar-and-water mixture, and then in sour milk and ardent spirits, the residue of all of these liquids being allowed to fall into the pit. The axe was then marked along its length with seven spots of red lead and replaced on the tray, together with cloves, paun leaves, frankincense, inderjon, sessamum seeds, white sandalwood, and a coconut. A fire was made from dried cow-dung and mango- or byr-wood; the contents of the tray, except for the axe and the coconut, were cast into the flames, along with a portion of *ghee* (clarified butter) from a small brass vessel. The priest then passed the axe through the flames seven times. The coconut was shattered with the axe, and the latter was wrapped in a clean white cloth and laid on the ground, pointing to the west. The ceremony ended with each participant eating a piece of the coconut, throwing the shell into the fire, and facing west in an attitude of worship. Thug pick-bearers were required to be sober and steady members of the tribe. They believed that each pick-axe, if buried or tossed into a well, would return to the hand of its particular bearer.

Another ceremony was the celebration of *Tapuni*, a sacrificial feast involving the eating of *goor* (consecrated raw sugar) after a raid. A blanket or carpet was placed on the ground and the *kusee* and a silver coin were placed on the carpet. The tribal leader then faced toward the west and seated as many Thugs on either side of him as the carpet would accomodate, with the others ranged behind him. The leader made a hole in the

ground and dropped a pinch of *goor* into it, invoking Kali and sprinkling water over the pit and the *kusee*. Some *goor* was placed in the hand of each Thug, care being taken that none was spilled on the ground; the sugar was consumed, and washed down with water. *Goor* was believed to have an irresistable and magical effect upon the person who partook of it.

The method by which Thugs introduced their sons into the "time-honored trade" was a curious one. When a boy was fourteen or fifteen years of age, he was presented with a pony to ride, and given many gifts with whose source he was not entirely satisfied. By degrees, he was led to the suspicion and eventual confirmation that his father was a robber, and finally that he was also a murderer. After a time, the boy or young man generally accepted the situation, and entered with some enthusiasm into a life that was not only carefree but filled with easily acquired plunder. The youth worked his way up from scout to grave-digger, from arm-holder to strangler. When he eventually aspired to the role of *phansigar*, he was obliged to seek out the oldest member of his clan to act as *guru*, and to beseech Kali for a favorable omen. If the omen was found to be unfavorable, the youth had to wait and try again another time. However, if the omen was favorable, an offering of silver was made, in the form of a silver coin tied within a knot in a handkerchief, and the disciple began his apprenticeship.

Omens, portents, tabus and curses were the controlling factors in the lives of the superstitious Thugs. Many of these omens prescribed avoidance of certain types of people: a leper, an oil-vendor, or a pregnant woman carrying a water-jar. The fall of rain in certain summer months (*ansootare*, "tear drops", meaning rain in the dry season), the songs and flight patterns of birds, cries of animals repeated on the right and on the left, the accidental dropping or burning of a turban---all of these were items of the gravest import. If a tree-lizard fell onto a Thug, every garment which it touched had to be given away in charity. If a snake, jackal or kite---all considered creatures of evil portent---should be sighted at the beginning of any raid or other undertaking, the activity was postponed. The tabu which prohibited the killing of a traveller accompanied by a woman or a cow has already been mentioned. (However, if a Thug could persuade the traveller to leave the woman or to sell the cow, he would thereupon proceed with the murder.) The gradual abandonment of such tabus, especially those concerning women, brought about the eventual decay of *Thuggee*.

The Thugs had their equivalents of saints. Among these was the venerated leader Dada Dheera of the Bhursote clan, whose name was invoked in certain Thug rituals. Another was the Mooltanee leader, Jhora Naek. With the aid of a single servant, he strangled a man who was carrying property valued at £16,200, and although none of his clan had participated in the killing he took

the plunder back to his village and divided it among his neighbors. For this act of honor and self-denial, both he and his wife were canonized.

Having stemmed from Muslim roots, the sect of Thugs continued to have a large percentage of Muslims among its adherents: nine-tenths of the Oude Thugs were Muslim, as were three-fourths of those who lived south of Nerbudda, one fourth of those living in Rajputana, and about half of those in Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Bundlecund and Sangor. The Muslim heritage of the Thugs is worth considering in connection with the Call of Siva. Mohammedan Arabs are known for a wailing or ululating sound, which they use for signals, cries of mourning, etc. (Recall the scene of the wailing Bedouin women on the cliff in the film *Lawrence of Arabia*.)

It remains only to discuss the "mark of Kali". Nayland Smith found this mark branded on the forehead of "one of the Doctor's religious assassins" who attacked him in the Demuras tomb during his search for Petrie's lost daughter Fleurette (chapter 10 of *The Trail of Fu Manchu*). The attacker was later referred to indirectly as a "thug" (lower case). However, it is extremely unlikely that he was a genuine member of the Thug sect. For one thing, he was described as a "lithe yellow man", implying an Oriental ancestry; and for another, he employed a knife as his weapon, rather than a strangler's scarf. There is, in fact, no historical evidence at all to support the use of a brand or other distinguishing mark by Thugs. As Douglas Rossman has pointed out, Thugs would hardly use such a mark when they relied to a great extent upon face-to-face deception of their victims.

Historical records are unanimous in characterizing Thugs as formidable and treacherous people. (Their treachery is illustrated by one occasion on record, when a band of 125 Thugs asked 27 Dacoits to join them, and then turned on the Dacoits and murdered them.) Each of the many independent and mutually jealous states of India tolerated the Thugs, albeit with unease and dread, as long as its own subjects were not molested. The attempts of the British overlords to rid India of this murderous cult were largely unsuccessful. However, in 1826, Lord William Bentinck (Governor General of India between 1828 and 1835) and Captain William Sleeman made the first successful incursions against the cult. Between the years 1831 and 1837, with the help of native authorities and Thug informers, an extensive campaign was waged: 3,266 Thugs were captured, of whom 412 were hanged and many others transported. Remnants of the sect survived for a few more years, and there were limited outbreaks in the Punjab in 1853, but since then there has been silence. *Thuggee* has been considered stamped out since the 1850s.

But is it really dead? Douglas Rossman has called attention to an article in the *Overseas Hindustan Times* of 30 November 1968, reporting three separate cases of ritual murder and human sacrifice which sound suspiciously like the work of Thugs. Isolated and unrelated events? Or a manifestation of the reawakening of *Thuggee* after a sleep of more than a century?

II.

The Dacoit subscribed to none of the elaborate ritual or religious fanaticism which characterized the Thug. The name is derived from *dakait*, the Hindustani word for bandit or robber. Dacoity (Hindustani *dakaiti*) is a term applied to a band of five or more Dacoits.

The term Dacoity was also applied to the armed gangs who were involved in the Burmese wars of the early nineteenth century. The Burmese Invulnerables kept themselves under the influence of opium to enhance their fighting prowess, and adorned themselves with magical tattooing and had metal pellets embedded beneath the skin of their arms and chests as a charm against wounds.

The princes and kings of Burma were noted for the instability of their reigns and for their extreme cruelty. It was quite common for a Dacoit to be tortured in open court under the direction of a judge. Punishments included disemboweling, impalement, burial alive, and the careful breaking of every bone in the body. A thief was branded on the cheeks and chest for a first offense, had his hands cut off for a second offense, and was decapitated for a third offense. (One wonders how a third offense was committed by a thief without hands...) A favorite way of disposing of a Dacoit was to paint a bull's-eye on his body and use him for target practice.

Dacoits lived in inaccessible places in the jungles. They were able to move about without molestation by disguising themselves as holy-water carriers, as *brinjarees* driving bullocks, or as pilgrims or mourners. When disguised in the latter way, they were accustomed to carry bags of human bones---men's bones in a red bag, women's in a white one. These bags were not supposed to come in contact with the earth; at encampments or resting places they were supported on tripods formed of wooden or bamboo poles. These poles also served the Dacoits as shafts for the spearheads which they carried in their waistbands.

In central India, Dacoits appeared as Alukramies, a small party of pilgrims accompanied by a priest and by hired ascetics called *Byragees*. They carried tents, *nakaras* (kettle drums), trumpets and domestic animals. They covered their bodies with paint and ashes, and each wore a small cloth waistband and a cloth about the head. Their processions were identified by a red flag embroidered with the figure of Hanuman.

The Budhuk Dacoits lived in Oude Teraie, the belt of forest land lying at the foot of the Nepal Hills of northeastern India, and were considered to be of low caste. In the eastern part of Teraie, they were known as Seear Marwars, numbering four to six thousand males gathered in colonies of three to four hundred each. They were originally husbandmen, and became Dacoits under Shoojah-Ood-Dowlah, the Nawab of Oude. Maherban, who had his

Dacoits: John Merton and ? in *Drums of Fu Manchu* (Republic Pictures, 1940)

fort at Etwa in Oude Forest, was probably their greatest chief. He was eventually hanged. Other chiefs of lesser importance were Cheyda (Maherban's brother), Naeka, Bukshee, Hemraj, Mungul Singh, and Gujraj.

Between 1819 and 1834, Dacoit activity was widespread, ranging from Calcutta, on the Bay of Bengal, northward through Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, and as far as Kathmandu.

Much of the Dacoits' success was due to their skill with disguises and to their boldness and resourcefulness which allowed them to get within easy striking distance of their victims and to escape with the loot before anyone realized what had happened. They were known to do such daring things as spiking the guns of a fort and chaining the gates shut to prevent the garrison inside from pursuing them. Although they would kill if forced to do so, they preferred not to take life, often charging their muskets without shot and relying on the sound of their gunfire to create panic and to confuse their prey. They enjoyed the protection of the *Zemindars* (land owners) on whose land they dwelt; and on one recorded occasion a Budhuk colony found shelter with the Rajah of Kottar, in the British territories.

The Bagrees or Bagorras were the Dacoits of Rajputana, Gwalior and Malwa, consisting of about twelve hundred families living on the banks of the Chumbul River. They worshipped Kali, Devi, and Suruj Deota (the sun god). They followed the practice of burning the bodies of their dead; when this was not possible, the bodies were buried, but fingers were cut off and preserved to be burned later.

The Sanseea Dacoits were in demand at weddings as bards and minstrels. They were superstitious, believing in omens, and worshipped Ram, Bhowanee and Sheikh Fureed, in addition to special deities in the form of ancestral spirits which varied from village to village.

The Mangs or Kholapore Dacoits were looked on as outcasts. They kept their wives in ignorance of their true following and never robbed or cheated one another. Their leader was called a Naik. Each family had a household god similar to the Roman Lares. The Mangs spoke a peculiar dialect which may have been the original language of the Mahratta Empire.

In contrast to the variety of religions to be found in India, Buddhism was the dominant faith of Burma, and no doubt included many Dacoits among its believers. This probably inspired Sax Rohmer to introduce, in chapter IV of *The Hand of Fu-Manchu*, Nayland Smith's story of the incident which occurred in upper Burma on the outskirts of Manipur, concerning a Buddhist priest who was dying from the toxic effects of the Flower of Silence. The test that one had not been poisoned by this flower was the ability to pronounce the words *Sâkya Mûni*, the sacred name of Buddha.

The Dacoit ultimately went the way of the Thug although for a long time action against him was delayed because the police authorities were unaware of the existence of certain colonies. However, a plan for the suppression of Dacoits was contrived in 1826 by Frederick Currie, magistrate of Goruckpore. This plan, which involved the use of an irregular cavalry corps commanded by a Major Hawkes, had the effect of driving the Dacoits into new districts rather than of eliminating them.

The efforts of Captain Sleeman and others in the Indian Colonial Service were ultimately responsible for putting down the practice of gang-robbery which had flourished for many years. But old ways are slow to die. It is easily possible that, as late as sixty years after some order was brought about in these territories, a newspaper item dealing with similar crimes in some remote area of India may have suggested the use of Dacoits to Sax Rohmer.

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Editor's Note:

Probably the best known fictional treatment of *Thuggee* occurs in John Masters' novel *The Deceivers*. Other fictional uses of Kali-worship and ritual murder are found in *Woman of Kali* by Gardner F. Fox (Gold Medal #438, 1954) and *Terror* by Robert Bloch (Belmont #L92-537, 1962). The subject also comes up in a surprising way in one of the best of last year's mystery novels, *Gypsy in Amber* by Martin Smith (Putnam, 1971).

Douglas Rossman also recommends an additional non-fiction volume: *The Stranglers* by George Bruce. --R. E. B.

SAX ROHMER, GEORGE ROBEY AND "ROUND IN FIFTY"

by *R.E. Briney*

In the years between 1905 and 1910, Sax Rohmer divided his creative efforts between free-lance journalism and the writing of comedy songs and sketches for the music-hall stage. It was as a byline on the latter work that the penname "Sax Rohmer" first appeared. Later in life, Rohmer attempted to play down this portion of his career. According to his friend and fellow-writer Nigel Morland, "he hated it to be known that he was, in fact, a first-rate comic writer and a genius at what I would call 'music hall' bawdiness". At the time, however, writing for the music halls was the steadiest and most reliable means of making a living that Rohmer had found. His work was highly regarded, and several of the leading performers of the day commissioned him to provide material for them. One of his steadiest customers was the comedian, singer and pantomimist George Robey, for whom he wrote such songs as "It's a Lie" and "Bang Went the Chance of a Lifetime". Out of the purely business arrangement developed a friendship which lasted through many years. It was Robey who provided many of the ideas for the peculiar essays and prose sketches which made up Sax Rohmer's first book, Pause! (Greening & Co., Ltd., 1910). "ibis book, which was published without a byline, has been credited to George Robey by some biographers, but it was Rohmer who did most or all of the actual writing. And it was the publication of this book which ultimately was responsible for the successful launching of Sax Rohmer's fiction writing career.

George Robey was born at Herne Hill, London, cm 20 September 1869. He grew up in various parts of England, wherever his father's job as a civil engineer caused the family to move, and in Dresden, Germany. He attended Cambridge University for a short

time, until financial reverses in the family forced him to leave school and support himself. He lived for a while in Birmingham, England, where he and a friend performed mandolin-and-guitar duets at charity shows. Soon he moved to London, where he began his show-business career as a mesmerist's assistant. The mesmerist, "Professor" T. A. Kennedy, allowed Robey to perform comic songs and acrobatic stunts as part of the show, and within a short time the singer was well enough known to be offered individual engagements. He rapidly became one of the most popular of music hall performers, and was eventually dubbed "The Prime Minister of Mirth". With the spread of motion pictures, Robey transferred many of his famous stage characterizations to the new medium, and later displayed his talents as a character actor. In 1923 he played the role of Sancho Panza in a film of *Don Quixote*, and in 1932 he repeated the characterization in G. W. Pabst's superb film version of the same novel, playing opposite the great Feodor Chaliapin in the title role. (Pabst's *Don Quixote* is an acknowledged classic, and is still to be seen from time to time among the offerings of college film societies and the art film theaters in large cities.)

Robey's career continued to impinge on that of Sax Rohmer. In 1924, for example, Robey made two silent films (*One Arabian Night* and *The Prehistoric Man*) with Harry Agar Lyons; at this time, Lyons had just finished playing the role of Fu Manchu in a lengthy series of two-reel films based on episodes from the first three Fu Manchu books. The fullest meeting of the two careers, however, was in connection with the revue *Round in Fifty*. For this "musical adventure", an adaptation of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Sax Rohmer collaborated on the book and George Robey had the starring role. After a try-out week at Cardiff, the revue opened at the London Hippodrome on March 16, 1922. It was an instantaneous success, and ran for a total of 471 performances, including daily matinees. Rohmer's collaborators on the script were Julian Wylie, the show's producer, and Lauri Wylie; song lyrics were provided by Clifford Harris and others; the music was written by James W. Tate and Herman Finck.† In addition to Robey, the cast included Alec Kellaway, Jean Allistone, Helen Gilliland, Wallace Lupino, Barry Lupino, Renee Reel, Nora Roylance, Ruth French, Bob Cory, Fred Edgar, Marie Cazeneau, Phil Lester, Eddie Jaye, Victor Crawford, and Sophie Tucker. (Sophie Tucker joined the cast after the show had been running for some time. She enlivened the proceedings with the latest Tin Pan Alley ragtime and some Jewish dialect songs, which were apparently well received by the audience.§)

George Robey continued his successful career on the stage, on radio, and in films. He became a successful author. He traveled all over the world, arousing mirth and being showered with honors and awards (including honorary membership in the Sarcee indian tribe in Alberta, Canada). And finally, as Sir George

Edward Wade Robey, C.B.E., he died at the age of 85 on November 29, 1954.

Some months later, Sax Rohmer paid a final tribute to the memory of his friend. On August 4, 1955, he made the last of his infrequent appearances on radio and delivered a talk on George Robey on the B.B.C.'s *Show People* program.

NOTES:

† None of the standard show business reference works mentions Sax Rohmer's contribution to the music of *Round in Fifty*. However, in a letter to this writer in 1952, Rohmer listed himself as "part author and composer" of the revue; and in *Master of Villainy* it is mentioned that after the sudden death of James Tate, Rohmer provided some of the music for the show. (Since Rohmer did not read music or play an instrument, his contribution, like the music for some of his early songs, was probably in the form of melodies hummed or whistled by him and transcribed by someone else.)

§ I am indebted to John Matthew of Toronto, Canada, for this information, culled from the book *Revue* by Robert Baral (Fleet Press Corporation, N.Y. & London, 1962 and 1970).

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR *(continued from inside front cover)*:

California 90241; issued twice yearly, 50¢ per copy. The magazine is devoted to the works of mystery writer John D. MacDonald.

Perhaps some comment is called for regarding the "no responsibility" announcement on the Contents Page. It is an unfortunate fact of postal life that Third Class mail receives tenth class treatment: if sent to an obsolete address, it is generally neither forwarded nor returned to the sender, but is destroyed (even if plainly marked "Return Postage Guaranteed" or "Forwarding Postage Guaranteed"); and not infrequently, material sent to a correct and current address is lost as well. First Class mail is considerably more reliable. In any case, changes of address should be reported promptly (preferably in advance of the change) to the publisher of any magazine to which you subscribe.

The February 1972 issue of *National Lampoon* contains a mildly interesting lampoon (what else?) entitled "The Thoughts of Chairman Fu-Manchu" by Henry Beard. In the same issue is a typical (which means superb and indescribable) contribution by Edward Gorey, "The Awdrey-Gore Legacy".

According to a newspaper clipping which has been in the files for far too long, early in 1970 a man named Anthony Ferrara was arrested in Boston on a charge of postage stamp counterfeiting. Even ancient Egyptian sorcery is no match for postal rates... .

"SHAKESPEARE"

All hail, friends; give me speech!
This clamor doth surprise me.
I am great William Shakespeare,
But no doubt you recognize me.
Gaze on this gleaming pate,
And note my noble seeming;
Look well into these lustrous eyes,
Where Genius lies gleaming!

No addleknob am I,
No paltry pothouse poet!
I am the wonder of all times
And, 'sdeath, good folk, I know it!
A goodly blade, forsooth,
And wondrous well behaven;
Yet, gossips, I am known afar
As Waggish Will of Avon!

Refrain: High, high, high upon
The scroll of fame engraven,
My name Shakespeare:
Waggish Will of Avon.

-- *Sax Rohmer*

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LOOKING BACK ON "ROUND IN FIFTY"

by George Robey

Towards the end of the long "run" of the pantomime *Jack and the Beanstalk* I retired from the part of Dame Trot, as the rehearsals for the next revue had begun, and were keeping me busy. That amusing comédienne Nellie Wallace took my place, and she and Dorothy Ward carried on brilliantly till the new production was ready.

This was the revue *Round in Fifty*, which was to prove another Hippodrome success. Right from the first night it went with a bang, and for months it crowded the house not only every night but at a matinée every day. Before the curtain rose on the first performance most people seemed to think the title had something to do with golf; but they soon discovered that it meant round the world in fifty days, and was an up-to-date version of Jules Verne's famous romance of our boyhood's years, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Written by Sax Rohmer, in collaboration with Julian and Lauri Wylie, and set to music by James W. Tate just before his death and by Herman Finck, it showed Phineas (here called Phileas) Fogg making his famous wager and winning it. It took the audience from the Gridiron Club, London, to scenes in Boulogne, Brindisi, Hong-Kong, San Francisco, New York, California, Portsmouth, and so back to London and victory. There were some beautiful scenes in it, notably a white and silver Chinese ballet under white pagodas and a crimson sky, and a lovely orange grove in California, turning from day to night, with a steamer all lit up crossing a lake in the background, and the oranges turning into balls of fire. There was also as smart a quick-change scene as I ever saw, from an elaborate and dissolute cabaret interior to a grim Pussyfoot missionary revival meeting! The change was made in a few seconds, and it brought the house down every time.

My part was that of old Fogg's spendthrift son, Phil (you will remember he was the valet, Passepartout, in the novel). It was a lovely part from beginning to end. One of Phil's worries on his travels was that he had left a taxi-cab ticking for him in London, and from time to time he agonisedly wondered what its dial was registering. "Fifty days," I soliloquised, "fifty days of twenty-four hours each, at a tuppence a tick---how much change

Extracted from Chapter XXI of LOOKING BACK ON LIFE by George Robey (Constable & Co., Ltd., 1933). Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Constable & Co., Ltd.

will there be for me out of a pound-note when I get back?" In the scene of the 'Frisco Cabaret I tried to win at the tables, and when all my money was gone, I started investing garment after garment till at last I entered wearing nothing but a bathing costume, boots and socks, and a top hat! In this plight, Renée Reel, in the part of my telephone-girl sweetheart, Penelope, came up and offered me a loan of money. "No," I said firmly, "I could not accept a loan from a woman---especially a lady!" *Punch* seemed to like that episode, for it put a drawing of me in it in the middle of a page. In another scene I was a convict in Sing-Sing prison, where a "charity entertainment" of songs, recitations, and conjuring was being given to the "pore prisoners" by well-meaning but wildly incapable people, and the convicts were finding it worse than the treadmill! I remember the whole scene as a hit from beginning to end. After one of the most awful contributions of the awful amateurs I ejaculated in loud despair, "Lor' luv a duck! An' they 'ung Crippen!" and I still seem to hear the roar of the audience that followed.

In another scene a Singing Pullet figured. "You pullet and it sings!" was the joke. In another I had an "adopted elephant" which trumpeted loudly "off" when I was soliloquising. At last, in desperation, I rushed from the stage, and returned in a few moments staggering under the weight of two huge ivory tusks. "I'll teach elephants to argue!" I exclaimed. And in one scene how the critics bellowed in mirth when I recklessly cried, "Who cares what the critics say!" As it happened, they had none but nice things to say next day. The scene in the Pussyfoot chapel where I explained what a reprobate I had been in my alcoholic past and led the chorus in temperance hymns also seemed to give the audience great comfort; and after one of my songs I quite electrified the house by giving a step dance which, as several critics remarked, showed I could twiddle my feet with the best of them, and finishing up with a complete cart-wheel, in spite of my fifty years. The reader will, I hope, excuse all this about myself, but it really was a jolly part, and I did enjoy it.

Renée Reel looked and acted gaily as Penelope, and the company also included the cousins, Wallace and Barry Lupino, Alec Kellaway, Jean Allistone, and Ruth French with the "Hippodrome Eight" in the principal dances. The production went as smooth as butter on the first night, for we had had a preliminary week with it at Cardiff; and the melodies of Tate and of Finck were real ones that soothe and charm, not the jazzy kind of stuff that could never make anyone but a nit-wit happy. In fact, the show was classified on the programme as "a musical adventure," and musical it *was*. And presently it became still more so when Helen Gilliland, who had done such dainty work in Gilbert and Sullivan opera, came into the cast as the lady journalist, Jill Carey, and warbled mellifluously in the "Romance of the Tea-leaves" and the gorgeously coloured Californian scenes.

I only heard of one soul who couldn't abide *Round in Fifty*. He came one afternoon to see it, and afterwards had to be helped into a cab by the whole front-door staff. When he got home he wrote a letter to his pet paper and sent me a copy. Part of it ran as follows:--

> "Why do people laugh at Robey? When in this revue he exclaims to a fair temptress: 'It is women like you that make men like me like women like you' the audience rocked. When strolling into a scene purporting to represent a cabaret in San Francisco he beamingly remarked 'So this is Genoa!' they nearly fell out of their seats. When he helplessly asked the audience 'Am I mad, or is it only insanity?' they bellowed like the bulls of Bashan. And when, shut up in a prison cell and clad in convict garb he murmured sadly 'All this is so new to me!' I thought the laughter would never end. Why all this?"

It does seem odd, doesn't it? But who can compass the scope of the human mind? What does the great Welsh poet say on this very subject? Permit me to quote that memorable quatrain:--

> "Uwch y ser hoenwych, siriol---Haul ydyw
> Y gwyliedydd nefol;
> Hwythau, fel gronynan'n ol
> O dano, yn gadwynol."

There you have it! Yet how few people know those profound and trenchant lines! And how fewer still are aware that the name of their author was---John L. Toole!

Altogether I think *Round in Fifty* was the best revue I ever took part in. To begin with, it had a really good plot that kept the audience excited from start to finish. Then it introduced the cinematograph (which was more of a novelty eleven years ago than it is today) in a most interesting way. The gradual approach of an Atlantic liner which I was trying to catch up in a motor launch was most effective, and always got thunderous applause. So also did the race along the Portsmouth road, which was won just in time to secure the wager, thanks to the unexpected coming in of winter time, giving an extra hour. And, last but not least, the show was produced in his very best style by Julian Wylie, one of the ablest fashioners of revue and pantomime in the country, always introducing novelties, one of the easiest men to work with, and also one of the most appreciative.

The suspense is over: in April 1972 the Bowling Green University Popular Press will publish *Master of Villainy: A Biography of Sax Rohmer* by Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, edited (with foreword, notes, and bibliography) by Robert E. Briney. In common with Bowling Green's previous volumes, the book will be released in both casebound and paperbound versions, priced at $10.00 and $4.00, respectively. (The address: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 101 University Hall, Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.)

Views & Reviews magazine is currently serializing the article "Sax Rohmer Revisited" by R. E. Briney. This is yet another version of the essay which appeared in the first issue of this *Review* and was reprinted in Mike Nevins' anthology *The Mystery Writer's Art* (still available from Bowling Green at the address above for $8.95 casebound, $3.50 paperbound). This incarnation of the essay is in three parts, with illustrations. Part I was in the Fall 1971 issue (Volume 3, Number 2). *Views & Reviews* is available at $4.00 for a four-issue subscription, from P. O. Box 4115, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210. The magazine customarily features articles on subjects ranging from Mae West's films to symphonic music, but concentrates principally on aspects of popular culture in films and books.

The publishing firm of Tom Stacey Ltd. in London has embarked on an ambitious program of bringing back into print an assortment of neglected mystery, fantasy, and adventure novels. Two titles by Sax Rohmer have been issued---*Brood of the Witch Queen* and *The Yellow Claw*---and more are announced for future publication. Books by H. Rider Haggard (the superb *Red Eve*), Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert W. Chambers (*The Slayer of Souls*), A. Merritt (*Creep, Shadow!*), Edgar Wallace, Clayton Rawson, Carter Dickson, and many others, are on the list. The books are priced at £1.80 each, and may be obtained from the publisher (at 28 Maiden Lane, London WC2E 7JP, England) or from Vernon Lay (52, Oakleigh Gardens, Whetstone, London N20 9AB, England).

The one volume that I have seen (*Witch Queen*) is sturdy and attractive insofar as the dust-wrapper and binding are concerned. It was reproduced photographically from the first British edition, which unfortunately was printed on rough paper in an unattractive type-face; in consequence, the reprint text is unsightly and difficult to read. This defect should not be evident in those reprints whose original editions were more attractive.

Just to hand is the information that Tom Stacey Ltd. will publish the British edition of *Master of Villainy*. It is likely that this edition will be identical to the U.S. edition; no further details are presently available.

SAX ROHMER: AN ASTROLOGICAL ANALYSIS

by
Julian Biggers

The ancient science of astrology has gone modern to find applications in industry and technology in the form of meteorological forecasting and earthquake prediction. The success of recognized scientists in these areas has given increased support to the more popular form of astrology, that of casting the natal or birth horoscope for individuals. The development of an individual horoscope may take the simplistic approach of placing the Sun at birth in one of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Such an approach obviously leads to little differentiation among persons born under the same sign. Professional astologers increase individualization by taking into account the positions of all the planets and the Moon at the time of birth. Further precision is obtained by taking into consideration not only the placement of a heavenly body in a sign, but also the relative positions of the planets to each other. The basic positions considered by the astrologer are the Square (two planets at right angles to each other), Conjunction (planets in the same space), Trine (planets separated by 120 degrees), and Opposition (separation by 180 degrees). A highly specific horoscope can be prepared when all of the variables and combinations are considered.

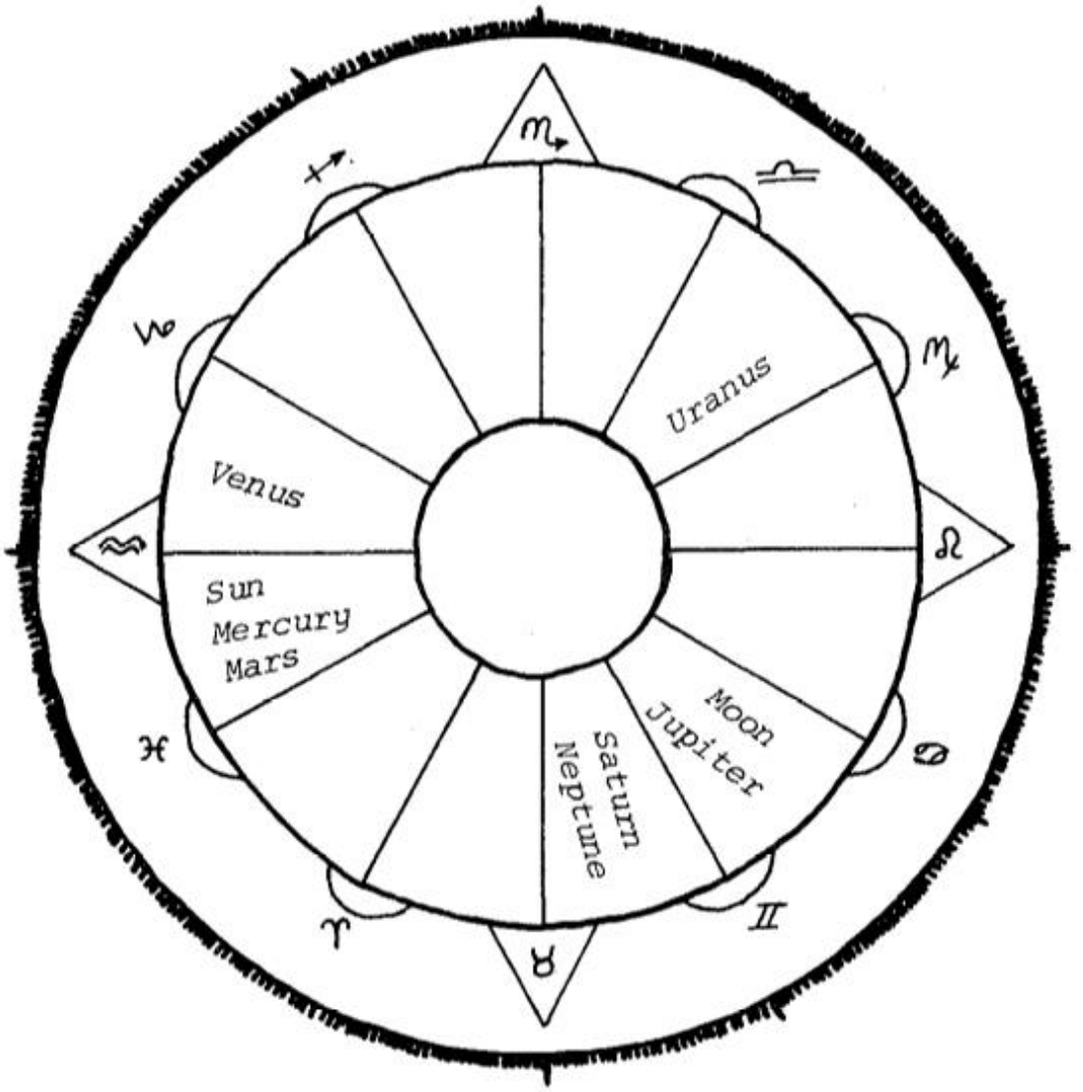
Information on the date and place of Sax Rohmer's birth was provided by the editor of this *Review*, and the references cited at the end of the article supplied the interpretations reported here. The horoscope for Sax Rohmer suggests a most interesting and complex person. Half of the signs foretell an inclination toward the mysterious, exotic, or occult. We shall examine each aspect in turn.

Character

Sun in Aquarius. Mr. Rohmer is likely to be a great self-dramatist. He is intellectually quick, apt, intuitive, and inclined to skim the surface of many and varied things. He tends to be scientific, unpredictable, and a lover of the curious and unusual. He has an idealistic nature, and holds strong likes and dislikes. He undoubtedly cherishes his freedom and independence. A progressive thinker and humanitarian with a pronounced streak of originality, he tends to view the world with a detached and unconventional attitude. In expounding some of his views, he may be looked upon as an eccentric.

Moon in Gemini. Mr. Rohmer likes books and is fond of literary and scientific subjects. He is probably quite skillful with

SAX ROHMER: born 15 February 1883
28 Rann St., Ladywood,
Birmingham, England
hour of birth unknown



Aquarius ♒	Taurus ♉	Gemini ♊	Virgo ♍	Capricorn ♑
Sun	*Saturn*	*Moon*	*Uranus*	*Venus*
Mars	*Neptune*	*Jupiter*		
Mercury				

Squares □	Trines △	Conjunctions ☌
Sun-Saturn	*Saturn-Uranus*	*Saturn-Neptune*
Jupiter-Uranus	*Sun-Jupiter*	*Mercury-Mars*
Sun-Neptune	*Moon-Mars*	
	Uranus-Neptune	
	Moon-Mercury	

his hands, and is possibly even ambidextrous.

Mercury in Aquarius. This sign signifies broad humanitarian interests. Rohmer is undoubtedly familiar with the great books and writers of the past and present. He enjoys profound philosophical discussions, is somewhat ahead of his comtemporaries, and may be considered eccentric.

Mars in Aquarius. Rohmer is original and inventive, with a particular interest in electrical devices. This sign strengthens the indications of attraction to literature, philosophy, science, and the borderline sciences.

Jupiter in Gemini. With this sign, Rohmer may be somewhat impractical, but is blessed with a sense of humor, a gay outlook, and a ready flow of ideas. He is a born philosopher-communicator, and is likely to be rather disorganized at times.

Uranus in Virgo. Another indication of attraction to scientific curiosities, archaeological "imponderables", and exotic artifacts from the past. This sign accentuates intellectual abilities and devotion to the cause of greater welfare and comfort for everyone.

Neptune in Taurus. This sign gives Rohmer a strong leaning toward luxury and ease. He may become short tempered when other people disagree with his belief in psychic and similar phenomena. He is attracted to the artistic, beautiful and spiritual aspects of life, with a tendency toward mysticism and the occult, and a love for what is unusual, curious, odd or antique.

Sun square Saturn. This sign encourages in Rohmer a strong pride which will cause him to stick to a lost cause not so much for the sake of the cause but to save face.

Sun square Neptune. This is another indication of a sensationalist nature and a person who will go out of his way for the bizarre, the unusual, or the mysterious in experience. It is possible that he will have a tendency to seek associates who will be considered unreliable or strange.

Uranus trine Neptune. This again is a sign inclining Rohmer to a practical interest in the occult. In combination with Sun square Neptune, this hints at the danger of mental confusion through occult studies.

Moon trine Mercury.and Mercury conjunction Mars. This combination supports the inquisitive and intelligent nature already mentioned. Rohmer is likely to be a good conversationalist, witty and apt in expressing himself. He may have an abrupt or clipped manner of speech. He is dexterous and can do things with his hands, though he prefers to use his mental powers.

Career

Moon in Gemini. With Sun square Saturn, this indicates that Rohmer's early life may be considered hectic, though he later settles down to real purpose and drive. He is likely to change

time, until financial reverses in the family forced him to leave school and support himself. He lived for a while in Birmingham, England, where he and a friend performed mandolin-and-guitar duets at charity shows. Soon he moved to London, where he began his show-business career as a mesmerist's assistant. The mesmerist, "Professor" T. A. Kennedy, allowed Robey to perform comic songs and acrobatic stunts as part of the show, and within a short time the singer was well enough known to be offered individual engagements. He rapidly became one of the most popular of music hall performers, and was eventually dubbed "The Prime Minister of Mirth". With the spread of motion pictures, Robey transferred many of his famous stage characterizations to the new medium, and later displayed his talents as a character actor. In 1923 he played the role of Sancho Panza in a film of *Don Quixote*, and in 1932 he repeated the characterization in G. W. Pabst's superb film version of the same novel, playing opposite the great Feodor Chaliapin in the title role. (Pabst's *Don Quixote* is an acknowledged classic, and is still to be seen from time to time among the offerings of college film societies and the art film theaters in large cities.)

Robey's career continued to impinge on that of Sax Rohmer. In 1924, for example, Robey made two silent films (*One Arabian Night* and *The Prehistoric Man*) with Harry Agar Lyons; at this time, Lyons had just finished playing the role of Fu Manchu in a lengthy series of two-reel films based on episodes from the first three Fu Manchu books. The fullest meeting of the two careers, however, was in connection with the revue *Round in Fifty*. For this "musical adventure", an adaptation of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Sax Rohmer collaborated on the book and George Robey had the starring role. After a try-out week at Cardiff, the revue opened at the London Hippodrome on March 16, 1922. It was an instantaneous success, and ran for a total of 471 performances, including daily matinees. Rohmer's collaborators on the script were Julian Wylie, the show's producer, and Lauri Wylie; song lyrics were provided by Clifford Harris and others; the music was written by James W. Tate and Herman Finck.† In addition to Robey, the cast included Alec Kellaway, Jean Allistone, Helen Gilliland, Wallace Lupino, Barry Lupino, Renee Reel, Nora Roylance, Ruth French, Bob Cory, Fred Edgar, Marie Cazeneau, Phil Lester, Eddie Jaye, Victor Crawford, and Sophie Tucker. (Sophie Tucker joined the cast after the show had been running for some time. She enlivened the proceedings with the latest Tin Pan Alley ragtime and some Jewish dialect songs, which were apparently well received by the audience.§)

George Robey continued his successful career on the stage, on radio, and in films. He became a successful author. He traveled all over the world, arousing mirth and being showered with honors and awards (including honorary membership in the Sarcee indian tribe in Alberta, Canada). And finally, as Sir George

SECRET EGYPT UNVEILED

by

W. O. G. Lofts

It was Saturday, August 4th, 1928; the time was 7:30 in the evening. Crowds were pouring out from the Kew Bridge Station and making their way across the road to the tiny "Q" Theatre. The theatre stood on the north end of Kew Bridge, which spanned the River Thames just at the point where the river turned southward to flow past Kew Gardens and the Old Deer Park. The theatre had made quite a name for itself for presenting plays which were later transferred to long-running engagements in London's West End theatre district. It was a tiny theatre of only 700 seats. Most of its patrons were "regulars" who booked their seats well in advance, irrespective of what was playing. Among the regular patrons were many West End theatre managers, agents, and top theatre critics. When a play was presented at the "Q", everyone connected with the project hoped and prayed that it would be one of the successful ones.

The theatre had been closed for quite some time for redecorating and renovation. For its grand re-opening on this Saturday evening, the chosen fare was a new play by that master of the exotic, Sax Rohmer. Rohmer was nearing the height of his fame in 1928. His character Fu Manchu had captured the imagination of the public, and his stories of villainous Orientals steeped in drugs and beautiful young women lured to their doom had sold in the millions. His reputation augured well for the new play.

At 8 P.M. the curtain went up, and the story began to unfold. Jim Dexter, a peer of England and an Egyptologist, has discovered the tomb of Cleopatra, and is attempting to excavate it. In the course of tracking down certain parties who have placed difficulties in his path, he proceeds to the House of the Lamp, a low den operated by a villainous Arab named Hassan. There he comes to the aid of the beautiful Miska al Mahdi who, together with her French maid, has been captured by Hassan's gang. The girl is destined to be sold into a life of shame, as Aswâmi Pasha, a very evil man, desires her. However, Dexter bids in the auction against Aswâmi Pasha. From this point on, the play becomes a struggle between the two men for the girl.

The first act passed fairly successfully, but shortly after the beginning of the second act the audience began to be restive. Taking into consideration Sax Rohmer's reputation as a weaver of

tales of mystery, adventure and the occult, the play's viewers were entitled to something out of the ordinary. What they were getting, however, was the type of fiction beloved in the kitchen. There was no secret at all in this story of Egypt, and no originality. The characters were conventional and the dialogue very clumsily written.

Many of the audience got up and left. Those who remained were treated to further doses of an appallingly hackneyed story. The beautiful Miska al Mahdi, it turns out, is really a high-born princess, and she falls in love with Dexter. A Lady Howard le Morton comes on the scene, a recent widow who was once loved by Dexter and is now desirous of capturing him and his wealth. Hassan, now in the pay of Aswâmi, tries to poison Dexter, but is foiled by the latter's faithful manservant Purvis. The hero then tries to make Aswâmi drink, against the tenets of his religion; the Egyptian throws the spirits into Dexter's eyes, temporarily blinding him. Pursuing her plans, Lady le Morton lies to Miska with such conviction that the latter goes into the desert to Dexter's camp to give him his freedom. There, in a hut which is full of treasure from Cleopatra's tomb, Aswâmi and Hassan play their last cards, and lose. Dexter and Miska depart, apparently to live happily ever after, while an incredible bit of bad construction introduces an anti-climax which suggests that Aswâmi and Lady le Morton are preparing to face the future together.

The few people who remained to the end called the traditional cry of "Author"---but he did not appear, perhaps uneasy that (to paraphrase his own words) something else might have crashed upon the stage instead of merely the play.

In brief, *Secret Egypt* was a disaster. In spite of this, it completed its allotted run until the end of the following week, playing nightly at 8:15, with matinees on Wednesday and Thursday at 2:30 P.M.

The majority of playwrights would wish such a dismal failure to be buried in obscurity. Not many of them could or would have done as Sax Rohmer did, and turned the experience into an amusing anecdote.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICA ROHMERIANA

by R. E. Briney

This column will consist of additions and corrections to previous installments of this department, principally the installment which accompanied TRR #7 (pages S-19 and S-20).

Brood of the Witch Queen

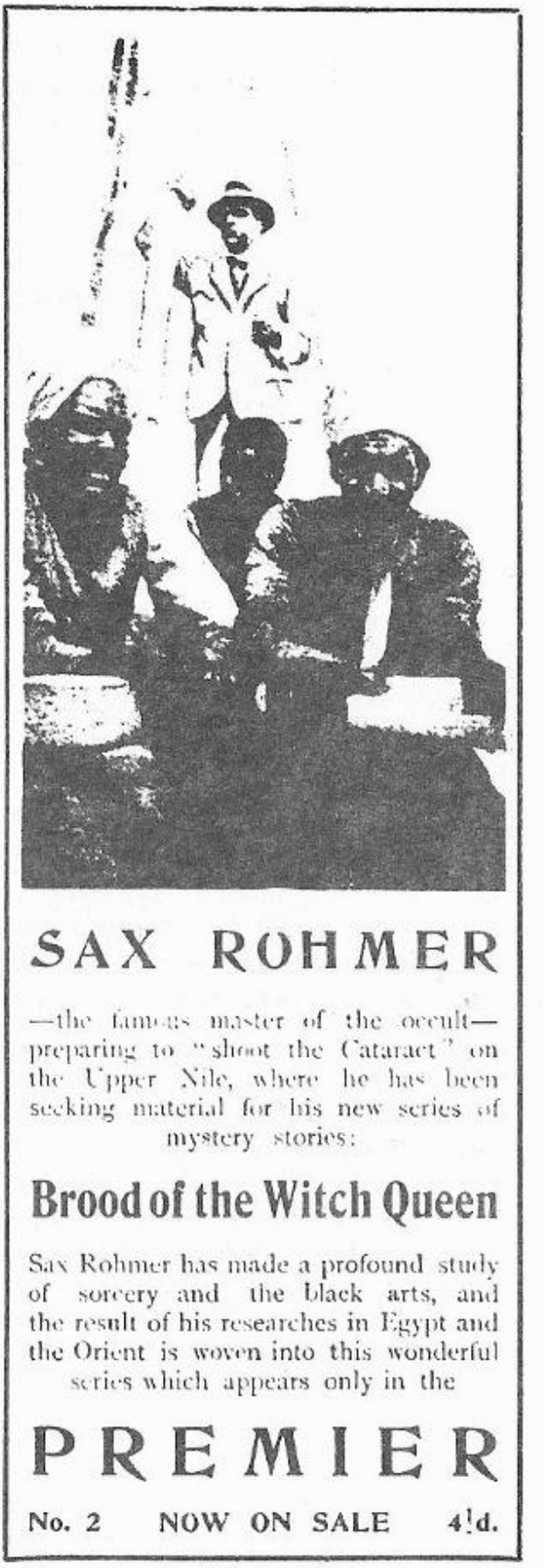
In the serialization of this book in *Mystery - The Illustrated Detective Magazine*, the first installment was titled "The Invisible Strangler", not "The Witch's Son". The latter title was apparently intended as a running title for the entire series, but it may have been dropped after the first episode.

Mrs. B. D. Goldberg of Arlington, Virginia, has confirmed the existence of an edition of *Brood of the Witch Queen* in the "Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery" series published by McKinlay, Stone and Mackenzie. The frontispiece in this edition is an adaptation of the dust-jacket design from the Doubleday editions.

The newest edition of the book is that published in October 1971 by Tom Stacey Ltd. in London. For further details, see the "Book News" column in this issue.

Pause!

Additional information on this title, Sax Rohmer's first published book, has been provided by W. O. G. Lofts, based


SAX ROHMER
—the famous master of the occult—preparing to "shoot the Cataract" on the Upper Nile, where he has been seeking material for his new series of mystery stories:
Brood of the Witch Queen
Sax Rohmer has made a profound study of sorcery and the black arts, and the result of his researches in Egypt and the Orient is woven into this wonderful series which appears only in the
PREMIER
No. 2 NOW ON SALE 4½d.

from *Penny Pictorial*, 9 May 1914

upon examination of the copy in the British Museum Library. It seems that the contents of the book are not short stories in the usual sense, but rather essays and prose sketches on a variety of topics. Most of these derived from ideas supplied by the music hall performer George Robey. The "Prefatory Notice" in the book is unsigned, as is the book itself, but is dated Herne Hill, February 10th, 1910; thus the writing of the book was undoubtedly completed by this date.

PAUSE! (anonymous) London: Greening & Co., Ltd. 1910 (Jly)
Popular Edition. Crown 8vo. 160 pp. 1/-.

Prefatory Notice: In Presenting to the Public the Author of PAUSE!

Part I: Hypotheses

He That Hath Eyes/A Grain of Dust/Holy Fire/ Idolatry/Quetzalcoatl

Part II: Theorems

Tumuli and Roses/Feet of Clay/Justice/Sebek-Ra/ The Bronze Mirror (from a French manuscript)

Part III: Parables

The Spirit Visible/Under the Cloak/Pan and the Pagan/The Socialist/What Is, Is

The book is bound in shiny paper covers, with the title in red letters and a design consisting of a photo of the palm of a man's hand against a black background.

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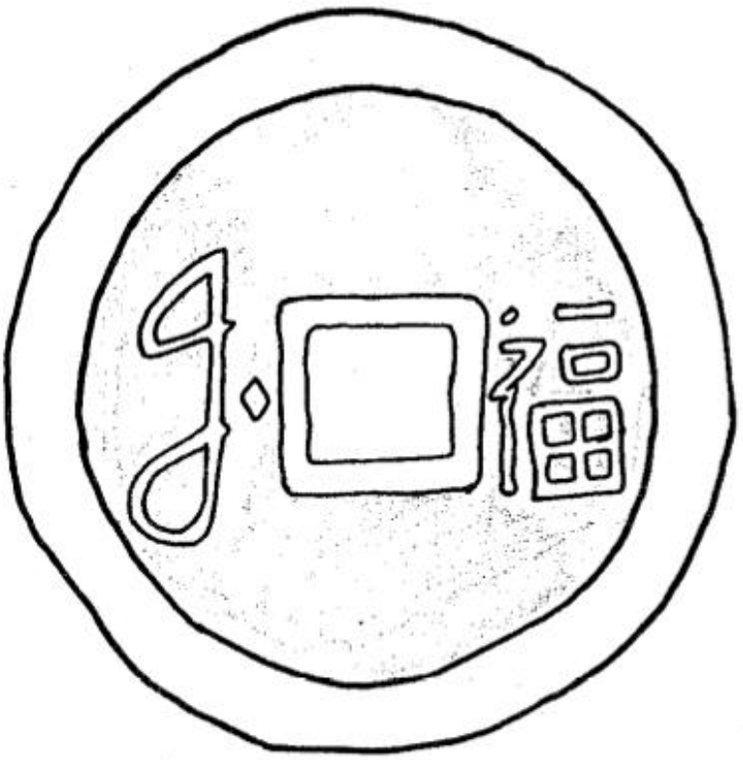
RECOMMENDED READING:

The Armchair Detective, edited and published by Allen J. Hubin, 3656 Midland, White Bear Lake, Minnesota 55110; quarterly, 4 issues for $4.00

The Mystery Reader's Newsletter, edited and published by Mrs. Lianne Carlin, P. O. Box 113, Melrose, Mass. 02176; bi-monthly, 6 issues for $3.00 (overseas $3.50)

The Howard Collector, edited and published by Glenn Lord, P. O. Box 775, Pasadena, Texas 77501; irregular (usually 2 issues per year), 60¢ per issue; devoted to material by and about Robert E. Howard



K'ang Hsi Cash - Fukien Mint
(Reverse Side)

FU (MANCHU)

by

Henry E. Wenden

I have always had a liking for things Chinese, and I pick up Chinese cash coins whenever I see them, just to jingle and look at, and to have something to put in my cinnabar box and cloisonné bowl.

After 1644 all Chinese cash were the production of Manchu mints, for Manchu emperors. Hence they bear, on the reverse side, mint marks either entirely in Manchu script or in Manchu and Chinese together. One of the mints that issued cash coins during the K'ang Hsi period (1662-1722) was the Fukien mint, the mint mark for which was the character *Fu* (ᡶᡠ). Hence the mint mark on these coins can be read *Fu* (Manchu)---the character *Fu* in Manchu script!

This recondite knowledge is taken from two little booklets that are said to be authoritative:

Old Coins of China, by Holger Jorgensen
Privately published (probably by the author), 1962

An Illustrated Guide to Chinese Cash Pieces of the Manchu Mints, A.D. 1662-1796, by A. E. H. Petrie
A Collectors Research Monograph; Ottawa, Canada, 1964.

Note the name of the author of the second booklet. A. E. H. is doubtless the son of Kâramanèh and Dr. Petrie, venturing far afield to Canada but still retaining an affectionate interest in things Oriental, inherited from his charming mother.

A REVIEW by John Harwood

RASCALS AT LARGE, or, The Clue in the Old Nostalgia, by Arthur Prager. Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971. 334 pages, $6.95.

Here is a book designed to let your memories travel back into the past, to the days when reading was more of a young people's passtime than it is today. In those days there was no TV to distract you from reading the latest adventures of your current fictional hero or heroine.

Most of the books discussed are those written especially for young readers. However there are two series of books originally written for adults which were later adopted by the younger set. Prager's first chapter is titled "The Victory Cry of the Bull Ape" and deals with the jungle adventures of Tarzan of the Apes. The second chapter, "The Mark of Kali", tells of that sinister Oriental villain, Dr. Fu Manchu.

Mr. Prager tells us that it was apparent even to the kids that Rohmer owed much to Conan Doyle for the depiction of Sir Denis Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie. Smith was "a lean, hawk-nosed, pipe-smoking neurotic" while Petrie was "a literary but not too bright general practitioner".

The chapter gives us a little something of Rohmer's career and also dwells on the various means the evil doctor had of overcoming his enemies. There is a list of many of the deadly insects, poisonous mushrooms, strangling apes, diabolical tortures, and of course the handy Golden Elixir with which the Devil Doctor acquired slaves---world-famous scientists who apparently died, only to turn up alive in Fu Manchu's laboratories to carry on their work for his benefit.

Mention is made of Fu Manchu in the movies: Warner Oland in *Dr. Fu Manchu* (actually *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu*)(1929) and *The Return of Fu Manchu* (1930), and Boris Karloff in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932). One of the British-made Fu Manchu films of the 1960s is also mentioned, though not by name.

This is an interesting chapter for the Rohmer fan to read, even though he may not agree that the Fu Manchu stories are boys' books.

For those mystery readers whose interest in the field was first aroused by the juvenile series, there are two chapters devoted to teen-age detectives. "The Secret of Nancy Drew" tells something of this girl sleuth, while "Rascals at Large" follows the adventures of the Hardy Boys. Other characters dealt with include Tom Swift, Bomba the Jungle Boy, Baseball Joe, the Rover Boys, the X Bar X Boys, and others.

All in all, this is an entertaining journey into the literary past of our youth.

W. O. G. LOFTS (the initials stand for William Oliver Guillemont) was born in 1923 in the London borough of St. Marylebone, where he still lives. After twenty-eight years as an engineer in a carburettor manufacturing firm, he now works for an advertising agency, but he is primarily a writer, bibliographer, and literary researcher. He is a recognized authority on British popular fiction, especially boys' fiction, his interest in the latter field having first been aroused during his service in Burma in World War II when he found a Sexton Blake novel in a bamboo hut lately abandoned by the Japanese. He has appeared several times on British radio and TV in connection with his specialty, and has written numerous magazine articles on subjects ranging from pirates to witches. (Some of these articles were published in the *Saint Detective Magazine*.) Bill has done extensive research on the lives and works of authors such as Edgar Wallace, Leslie Charteris, and Sax Rohmer. Charteris describes him as "a researcher of really phenomenal ability, ingenuity and thoroughness, and a man I would hate to be interviewed by if I were working for a foreign government". Three books written in collaboration with Derek J. Adley have been published: *The British Bibliography of Edgar Wallace* (Howard Baker, 1969), *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction* (Howard Baker, 1970), and *The Saint and Leslie Charteris* (Hutchinson Library Services, 1971). Still another book (on fictional detectives) has been completed and a publisher is being sought. Bill's research on Sax Rohmer included a trip to Birmingham in an attempt to photograph the house where Rohmer was born. Unfortunately the house no longer exists, having fallen victim to urban renewal some years ago. Other investigations were more successful and provided many facts which were incorporated into the Rohmer biography, *Master of Villainy*. Still more will appear in the comprehensive Sax Rohmer bibliography currently in preparation. And there is enough material left over to appear from time to time in these pages, as witness the discussion of *Secret Egypt* in this issue.

JOHN E. CARROLL lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Now in his sixth decade, he recently retired from a management position with the Bethlehem Steel Company. Among his many interests has been a life-long enthusiasm for detective and adventure fiction, especially the work of Doyle and Rohmer. He is a member of The Six Napoleons, a Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars.

HENRY E. WENDEN is a former resident of New England, where he taught at Boston University and Tufts University. Since 1957 he has been Professor of mineralogy at Ohio State University in

Columbus, Ohio. He confesses to a multiplicity of extracurricular interests: "I have recently spent a lot of time doing library research on the history of weaving and on early Ohio weavers. I gave a talk to the Central Ohio Weavers' Guild on early American hand-woven coverlets, a talk to the "Good Earth Mineral Club" (!) on the history and use of the petrographic microscope, and have a talk to the Columbus Amateur Radio Association coming up on the history of ship-to-shore wireless. All these hobbies keep me busy---what I need is to be rich!"

ROBERT E. BRINEY was born in Michigan in 1933, and raised in a house filled with books. Having formed early in life the conviction that the fundamental human activities are eating, sleeping and reading, he has pursued all three with equal zeal. At the age of eleven he discovered the stories of H. P. Lovecraft, and scared himself silly with a reading of "The Rats in the Walls" one bright summer afternoon. Within a year, a school friend had introduced him to the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, and he discovered a shelf of Sax Rohmer's books in the local public library. Next came the science fiction and fantasy pulp magazines, the first acquisitions in a collection which has continued to grow through the years and now numbers somewhere around 8000 books and periodicals. Briney is one of the founders and owners of Advent: Publishers, which has been since 1956 the only publishing house to specialize in non-fiction---criticism, bibliography, memoirs---about science fiction and fantasy. (Advent:'s most famous book is Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*, which has been a steady seller for more than fifteen years.) In the Spring of 1972 Advent: will publish a reference work, *An Annotated Bibliography of Bibliographical Works in Science Fiction and Fantasy Fiction*, by Robert E. Briney and Edward Wood.

Verse and assorted non-fiction (reviews, bibliographies, and articles) by R. E. Briney have appeared in *The Classical Outlook*, *American Book Collector*, *Destiny*, *Amra*, *Weirdbook*, *The Mystery Reader's Newsletter*, *The Armchair Detective*, *Views & Reviews* and other publications. Hobbies and enthusiasms, in addition to collecting, reading and writing about sf/fantasy and mystery fiction, include bibliography, film history, mathematics, linguistics, music, ballet and *jai alai* (watching, not playing!).

Briney holds an A.B. degree from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has taught at M.I.T., Bowdoin College, and Purdue University, and is currently Professor of Mathematics and Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the State College in Salem, Massachusetts.

Letters to Limehouse

From W. O. G. LOFTS, London, England:

I was most interested in the recent article and letter on the subject of bird-eating spiders. These were known as the *Mygale* species, and I had first-hand experience with them in the Burmese jungles during the Second World War. My duties as a G.P.O., sending back mathematical information on the range for our artillery to fire, required me to be right near the enemy lines on patrol through the dense jungle growth. These spiders used to spin their webs between trees, across narrow jungle trails, and one had to be especially careful not to walk into them. Moving about at night was a most horrible experience, probably more so than actually coming face to face with the enemy. If one's face got caught in one of the webs, quick as lightning the spiders would leap at one's eyes. Natives spoke of people dying of fright at the experience, their bones being found in the jungle long afterwards. Generally speaking, the birds which the spiders caught were hummingbirds, who were not blessed with radar like the bat. Sax Rohmer was correct: these spiders were horrible to encounter. However, the normal house-spider is harmless, and in my younger days I had a pet one, named Freddy.

From FRANK ECK, Brooklyn, New York:

On Saturday, April 10, 1971, I was at home listening to the 7:00 news-cum-gore report on Channel 2. As they were presenting their report on Viet Nam war operations, the newscasters mentioned an especially devastating napalm-type chemical which when ignited would burn for four days. It was reported that this chemical, contained in drums and dropped by helicopter into the Vietnamese jungles, had been christened *Fu Gas* by the soldiers. Why they had chosen this name was not known. Is it possible that this is the way the spirit of Fu Manchu is being kept alive? If so, we have moved far from the paper villainy of fiction into a nightmare reality!

From J. L. BIGGERS, Lubbock, Texas:

Recently I came across what may have been the basis for Rohmer's "The Secret of Dhoon" in *Brood of the Witch Queen*, while looking through a book about the Scottish clans. The Monster of Glamis Castle at Strathmore was born to Lady Glamis on 21 October 1821, the day of her death. It (if the monster existed) was kept

in a secret room of the castle, and its existence was passed on to the heir upon his coming of age. Possibly this legend was known to Rohmer.

From JOANNE SWENSKI, Iron River, Michigan:

I was especially glad to see Robert Lowndes' article on the Fu Manchu series in No. 7, as I feared it would be lost entirely with the untimely demise of *Startling Mystery Stories*.

Referring to Fah Lo Suee, Mr. Lowndes states on page 6: "She first appears in *Daughter of Fu Manchu*, of course ... ." Actually her first appearance on the scene occurs towards the end of *The Hand of Fu-Manchu* when Petrie encounters her on a train travelling to London. She is not definitely identified in this book, though Smith surmises that she is Fu Manchu's daughter.

In referring to *The Trail of Fu Manchu* on page 7: "It is here that Smith confesses he loves her, and she acknowledges that she reciprocates." It was Fah Lo Suee who revealed that she loved Smith (to his utter astonishment, as well as that of the reader!). At no time did he indicate that he returned her affections.

From ROY HUNT, Denver, Colorado:

Robert Lowndes' article was excellent. Too bad he missed *The Return of Fu Manchu* with Warner Oland. *The Return* took up where the first film left off---the poison was not fatal. In one scene one of Fu's servants, having done his bit, is rewarded by Fu's "good humor". In another scene the captive Nayland Smith is offered an ancient egg by Fu Manchu, but does not care to partake. How Fu is killed off in this film is a bit vague to me now, though I saw it many times in 1930. My impression, however, is that he was supposedly drowned. In 1931 Warner Oland as Fu died off permanently in the first part of *Daughter of the Dragon*.

Keep up the fine Egyptian covers; they have a good Rohmerian flavor.

As has been mentioned before in this column, the covers on Nos. 5, 6, and 7 were based on plates in the two-volume work THE GODS OF THE EGYPTIANS by E. A. Wallis Budge (Dover 1969). Roy Hunt, of course, has contributed to every one of TRR's covers, since he is the designer of our title lettering.

From JOHN HARWOOD, New Bedford, Massachusetts:

On page 4 of Robert A. W. Lowndes' excellent "The Immortal Enemy" the author asks if any of the readers can tell why Fu Manchu comes to change his opinion of Dr. Petrie. In the first

part of *Insidious*, the doctor regards Petrie as a fool, but later in the book thinks of him as "a valuable acquisition to my Council"

Kâramanèh's brother Aziz has been held in a deathlike trance by a strange Oriental drug known as the Golden Elixir. The girl steals a vial of the drug from her master, and Petrie uses it to restore the boy. Fu Manchu, believing Kâramanèh is still loyal to him, thinks that Petrie has discovered the secret formula for the drug by himself. Thus he gives Petrie more credit than the latter deserves. In later years, Petrie makes up for this deception by becoming an authority on Oriental diseases.

I also liked Julian Biggers' "Locating Dr. Petrie's Practice". This reminds me of a minor puzzle in the early Fu Manchu books. In *Hand* and *Daughter* we learn that Petrie sold his practice to a Dr. Murray when he left for Egypt. However, in *Trail* we are told that the doctor's name is Norton and he is living in Petrie's old quarters. Absence of mind on Rohmer's part?

From DOUGLAS A. ROSSMAN, Baton Rouge, Louisiana:

Having resolved the location of Petrie's house to my own satisfaction several years ago, I was eagerly awaiting Professor Biggers' revelations on the subject. He did a yeoman job, but indulged in more speculation as to the general location than was really necessary. In *The Trail of Fu Manchu* Rohmer made it quite clear that Petrie's former practice, now taken over by Dr. Norton, was on South Side next to Clapham Common. The details provided in the early Fu Manchu books, together with examination of a good map of the area, serve to verify this location, as Prof. Biggers has shown.

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The Rohmer Review is edited and published by

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245 Lafayette St., Apt. 3G
Salem, Massachusetts 01970.

Contributing Editor: Douglas A. Rossman

Subscription to the current series (issues 8-10) is $2.00 via Third Class Mail and $2.50 for First Class mailing. The publisher assumes no responsibility for replacement of copies sent by Third Class mail.

A very few copies of issue #7 are still available, priced at 75¢ each. Issues #1-6 are out of print.

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